

Examining the Relationship between Social Media and Elections in Nigeria: Analyzing the Impact on the 2023 Abia State and Enugu State Governorship Elections in the South East Region

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Abstract— The purpose of this research was to assess the impact of social media on Nigerian elections, with a particular focus on the governorship elections in Abia and Enugu states in 2023. The research data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The agenda-setting theory was selected as the framework for analysing various aspects discussed in the relevant literature. The survey design method was employed, and convenience sampling was used to select a sample size of 200 voters from the population, which consisted of voters in Abia State and Enugu State. The collected data was analysed using the Regression Analysis Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) tool. During the assessment of the literature and hypotheses, it was discovered that social media played a key role in promoting political awareness and encouraging participation in Nigeria's 2023 governorship election. Furthermore, the use of social media in covering the election helped to prevent rigging and fraud while also affecting vote preferences in Abia and Enugu States. As a recommendation, the researcher advocated revising the Electoral Act to incorporate precise guidelines on the use of social media in future Nigerian elections.

Keywords— Nigeria, elections, social media, political awareness.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of the modern press in the 18th century, various individuals and professionals, including authors, politicians, academics, and media experts, have ascribed important roles to the press as an institution [1]. This recognition is crucial because journalism plays a vital role in a country's progress and survival. The development of any nation relies on effective knowledge sharing, as knowledge is both powerful and essential for human existence. In this regard, [2] argues that information possesses the potential to shape public discourse. In the context of true public participation, the media acts as a platform for spreading public information, increasing awareness, and influencing governmental decisions [3]. It is an effective instrument for raising democratic expectations and settling problems. Furthermore, Sidney emphasizes that the level of press freedom influences the press's efficacy as a watchdog on public affairs. This linked populace has improved access to information, expanded chances for public voice, and strengthened capacities for coordinated action. Social media has emerged as a key component of people's lives, including a varied variety of actors such as regular citizens, activists,

NGOs, telecommunications firms, software developers, government agencies, and even governments themselves.

It has become a reality for countless individuals, enabling them to engage in discussions on both local and national issues. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are not just technological advancements of the twenty-first century; they have swiftly become influential platforms that shape opinions (Ibid.). Social media, as defined by [4], refers to a group of internet-based applications that leverage the principles and technology of Web 2.0, facilitating the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social networking services are platforms that enable the formation of social networks online. These web-based services allow users to communicate with others in their network by sharing thoughts, photos, posts, activities, events, and hobbies.

Hence, social media functions as a bidirectional platform that not only disseminates information but also fosters engagement with users and facilitates interactions among them. In Nigeria, various stakeholders, including candidates, voters, observers, and the electoral authority (the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC), expressed dissatisfaction with the general elections. Reports emerged of election irregularities such as disenfranchisement of potential voters, theft of ballot boxes from election officials, fraudulent insertion of illegitimate ballots, and allegations of collusion between election officials and politicians to manipulate results and undermine the people's will (Aleyomi and Ajekaiye, 2014; Ibrahim and Ibeanu, 2009).

The deficiencies that plagued the Nigerian electoral process in 2023 significantly eroded its credibility, leading to demands for more transparent, accountable, and equitable elections. The traditional media, encompassing television, radio, and print, have failed to meet expectations in providing the electorate with accurate information before, during, and after elections. One reason for this is that a considerable portion of Nigeria's traditional media is owned and controlled by the country's political elites. Consequently, there is a need for a shift towards a more interactive media format that allows for user-generated content and breaks the traditional media's monopoly over gatekeeping and agenda-setting.

The significance of this study lies in its timeliness and novelty, focusing on the 2023 governorship elections as a case study. These elections provide a relevant context to explore the crucial role of social media platforms in the success of contemporary elections and the preservation of democracy in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, which faces political and religious conflicts. Aleyomi and Ajekaiye (2014) argue that the only way to establish a legitimate government is through the selection of leaders by the voters. Active participation is essential, and social media serves as one of the platforms for engaging citizens in their country's political affairs. In line with this, the present research investigates the utilisation and impact of social media coverage on Nigerian voters, using the governorship elections in Abia and Enugu States in 2023 as a specific case study.

Statement of the Problem

1. The main objective of this study was to assess the impact of the internet, social networking, and social media, specifically, on the notable performance of candidates in the 2023 governorship elections. The study also aimed to gather data on the percentage of young respondents engaging in networking activities, the extent of social media usage for accessing political campaign and electoral information, and the level of participant involvement in sharing information. Previous challenges faced by Nigerians, such as election irregularities, fraud, and interference by incumbent governments using federal resources and security, were among the critical issues addressed in this research
2. In a 2011 publication by Jawan and Osinakachukwu, a comprehensive study of Nigerian elections spanning nearly five decades revealed that consistent election rigging has resulted in the imposition of corrupt and illegitimate leaders who disregard democratic principles essential for good governance, the rule of law, constitutionalism, and fundamental human rights. This study aims to examine how social media, as a departure from conventional methods, has contributed to bringing about significant changes in electoral dynamics, as indicated by the findings of the research.

Research Questions:

1. How did social media contribute to Nigerian political awareness and participation during the recently concluded 2023 governorship elections?
2. To what extent did the depth and frequency of social media coverage impact the effectiveness of efforts to prevent election rigging and fraud?

Research Hypotheses:

H01: Social media had no significant role in fostering Nigerian political awareness and participation during the 2023 governorship elections.

H02: The coverage of Nigerian elections through social media did not effectively mitigate election rigging and fraud.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Concept of Social Media

Social media platforms are a contemporary form of web-based platforms that facilitate user connectivity and interaction. They are built on web 2.0 technology and rely on computer-mediated tools that enable users to express themselves, create or co-create user-generated content (UGC), form online communities, and engage in conversations with individuals from diverse geographical locations (Akpoghiran & Erubami, 2019). These tools can be categorised into various types, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), blogs and microblogs (e.g., Twitter), Projects that are collaborative (such as Wikimedia), communities of content (such as for instance, YouTube), virtual gaming environments (for instance, World of Warcraft), and social networks in virtual spaces (for instance, Second Life) (Kaplan & Haelin, 2010). In Nigeria, social media has emerged as one of the primary platforms for interpersonal communication, information exchange, and journalistic experiences (Ajayi & Adesote, 2015). It is estimated that 30.9 million Nigerians actively use social media, and this number is expected to reach 36.8 million by 2023 (Clement, 2019). The popularity of social media can be attributed to its fundamental principle of "share it and share in it. In addition to consuming content, users have the ability to create and share information, effectively becoming "prosumers. The increasing accessibility of the internet among Nigerians has also contributed to the rapid growth in the number of active social media users in the country. For instance, in 2019, approximately 126,078,999 Nigerians utilised the internet for various purposes (Internet World Stats, 2020).

Social media encompasses a wide range of online technologies and platforms that enable users to create and share content in real-time, fostering virtual communities and social networks. It provides an interactive space for individuals, organisations, and businesses to engage in communication, collaboration, and the exchange of information (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Social media includes various online platforms and services that allow users to create and share content, as well as engage in social interactions and networking. It offers individuals a platform to express themselves, connect with others, and participate in virtual communities, contributing to the development of a collective digital culture (Boyd, 2011). Social media comprises web-based applications and platforms that enable users to interact and communicate with others, sharing content and information in different digital formats. It facilitates the exchange of ideas, opinions, and experiences, promoting the democratisation of media and fostering global connectivity (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013)

Social Media Technologies

Media encompasses various forms, including magazines, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, podcasts, pictures, and videos. [4] Attempted to categorise social media into six distinct categories:

1. Collaborative projects, such as Wikipedia.
2. Blogs and microblogs, as exemplified by Twitter.
3. Content communities, like YouTube.
4. Social networking sites, including Facebook.
5. Virtual game worlds, such as World of Warcraft,
6. Second Life is an example of a virtual social world.

Three of these groups (blogs and microblogs, content communities, and social networking sites) are especially pertinent to the use of social media in the election process. In the realm of political communication, there has been significant interaction between traditional media and these three categories of social media. Traditional media channels, especially television and newspapers, seek to expand their reach by utilizing social media platforms for news dissemination. Newspapers like the Guardian, Vanguard, Daily Trust, and This Day in Nigeria, for example, have Facebook and Twitter pages, as do television networks like Channels.

Social Media and Political Participation: New Insights

Numerous studies have long contended that new technologies have the potential to enhance political participation and bolster democracy. For instance, in the 1920s, Berthold Brecht envisioned radio as a means of communication that could contribute to democratisation, while Benjamin Barber, in the 1980s, saw the possibilities of cable networks in strengthening local democracy (Barber, 1984). With the advent of the Internet and its unique attributes, many believed it held the power to democratise society. The argument was that the Internet could foster increased participation in the public sphere, which, in turn, could lead to greater equality and reduced hierarchy. The Internet's architecture, characterised by equal user status and direct interaction, was seen as potentially creating a level playing field for participation and deliberation, eroding hierarchical distinctions across different social classes. Since social media platforms are also part of the Internet, they have the potential to increase participation and facilitate deliberation. Scholars highlight two specific characteristics of social media that contribute to this: inclusiveness and the integration of mass media and personal media forms. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, are highly inclusive arenas where people from diverse backgrounds come together, disregarding factors like age, class, education level, religion, and ethnicity. The absence of a clear hierarchy within social media encourages freedom of expression, allowing individuals to comment and criticize. This inclusiveness means that people find themselves in the same digital space as individuals from different contexts of their lives, encompassing family, friends, old schoolmates, and new colleagues, a concept referred to by Marwick and Boyd (2010) as "collapsed contexts." The inclusive nature of social media is exemplified by the ability to maintain anonymity, allowing users to use nicknames or aliases when writing and commenting. While anonymity provides an opportunity to discuss sensitive topics, it can also lead to the spread of misinformation. The inclusiveness of social media is further enhanced by the variety of roles users can assume and their relationships with one another, enabling the combination of different types of information in flexible ways. The lack of traditional regulatory methods also contributes to inclusiveness, as it is difficult to restrict the content shared on social media. This has made social media a highly popular platform for socialisation and communication, resembling a Habermasian public sphere where democratic deliberation can take place. Social media also exhibit significant integration of mass media and personal media. According to Tanja (2014), social media

encompass elements of both mass media and private media and serve both public and private purposes. They possess characteristics of both institutional and personal communication, allowing personal conversations to be both private and public, resembling mass communication. Similar to how individual users interact on social media, institutional and professional users can also utilise these platforms to engage with the general public in an asymmetrical manner. This integration of media formats challenges traditional patterns of engagement.

The potential impact of social media's inclusiveness and integration of media on political participation and discourse is significant. Tanja (2014) identifies three potential effects of social media on the political process:

1. **Increased participation:** The inclusive nature of social media and the integration of various media forms reduce barriers to individual participation. It becomes easier and more accessible for people to access information, express their opinions, and communicate with a larger audience. This recognition of social media's importance has led politicians, political parties, and other political actors to utilise these platforms as effective tools for mobilisation during political campaigns. This was evident in the Anambra 2017 and the 2015 general elections in the country.
2. **Facilitated deliberation:** Social media can facilitate deliberation among a wider range of individuals. The diminished hierarchies between information senders and receivers allow everyone to express their opinions, and ordinary citizens can directly communicate with authorities and with each other. Examples from gubernatorial elections demonstrate how ordinary citizens freely uploaded content on social media, engaged in conversations, and expressed their opinions to both fellow citizens and political aspirants. INEC, the electoral umpire, also received comments from people on the ground, providing updates on situations in various wards and protesting any irregularities observed at their respective voting centers. Moog (2000) explains that as access to the internet expands globally and within national societies, it brings new opportunities for direct access to politically relevant information, unmediated communication between political organisations and potential members, and interactive discourse among citizens.
3. **Complex participation and deliberation:** The integration of different communication forms and the merging of social contexts can complicate participation and deliberation. In social situations, individuals often present themselves differently and emphasise different aspects in various social settings. When the existing body of literature on political participation and deliberation is combined within the framework of new technologies like social media. The democratizing potential of new media lies in the expectation that ordinary people can participate in politics both institutionally and in social settings, contributing to a stronger democracy (Barber, 1984) with more extensive participation.

Examining history, we can observe how social media has played a significant role in strengthening democracy in

Nigeria's electoral process and politics. The power of social media in political communication. The emergence of social media platforms has revolutionized the manner in which information is distributed and accessed, leading to substantial effects on political landscapes across the globe. This essay delves into the influence of social media on the coverage of the governorship election in the South-East region of Nigeria in 2023. Through an analysis of the utilization of social media platforms, its impact on political discussions, and the obstacles encountered, a deeper comprehension of the evolving connection between social media and Nigerian politics can be attained (Oyenuga, 2023).

1. Social media as a platform for political information dissemination

The widespread availability of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram has created a direct channel for political figures to effectively communicate their messages to a broad range of individuals. Political candidates and parties utilize social media to share their campaign pledges, interact with voters, and rally their supporters.

Amplification of political discourse

2. Social media platforms empower individuals to actively take part in political conversations, voice their viewpoints, and involve themselves in discussions.
3. The utilization of hashtags, popular topics, and content generated by users plays a significant role in influencing the public narrative surrounding the election.
4. The extensive reach and rapid nature of social media facilitate the swift distribution of news and information, delivering up-to-the-minute updates to the general public.

Elections in Nigeria

The cornerstone of democracy rests upon free and fair elections, which grant the people the opportunity to determine their governing body. Through regular elections, individuals can either accept or reject the prospective leaders. The legitimacy of a government is affirmed or revoked through the conduct of free and fair elections. This fundamental political right distinguishes democracy from other political systems. Elections also serve as an evaluation process, examining the performance of officeholders and their adherence to campaign promises. Elections and the selection of political leaders constitute the essence of democracy. A retrospective analysis of elections in Nigeria reveals a persistent issue of election rigging within the country's democratic process. They concluded that election rigging has impeded the establishment of democratic consolidation in Nigeria, hindering the desired change in leadership necessary for accountability. Instances of election rigging have been observed in various Nigerian elections, including those held in 1964/1965, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2007, and the 2023 general elections. Electoral fraud encompasses illicit practices such as unauthorized printing of voters' cards, unlawful possession of ballot boxes, ballot box stuffing, falsification of election results, unlawful thumb-printing of ballot papers, participation of ineligible voters, inclusion of fictitious names on voters' lists, unauthorized compilation of separate voters' lists, unlawful printing of forms for result collection and declaration, deliberate denial of

election materials to certain areas, announcement of results in locations with no elections, unauthorized result manipulation and announcement, harassment of candidates, agents, and voters, alteration of electoral officials' lists, as well as inflation of vote counts, among other transgressions.

2023 Nigerian Gubernatorial Elections

In 2023, gubernatorial elections were held in 31 out of the 36 states in Nigeria. These elections took place three weeks after the presidential election and elections for the National Assembly. The only exceptions were Imo State, Kogi State, and Bayelsa State, which held their elections on November 11. All states also conducted elections for their respective state houses of assembly on March 18. It is worth noting that the most recent regular gubernatorial elections in all states occurred in 2019. The Nigerian constitution imposes a two-term limit for governors, which disqualified 18 incumbent governors from seeking re-election. As a result of these term limits, several sitting governors were ineligible to run again. Among the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) governors, nine had their terms restricted, while nine others were eligible for re-election. In the case of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), four governors were eligible for re-election, whereas eight were affected by term limits. Consequently, elections were scheduled in 18 out of the 20 states with APC governors and 12 out of the 14 states with PDP governors. During the March elections, both the APC and PDP secured two governorships each. The APC won in Benue and Sokoto states, while the PDP emerged victorious in Plateau and Zamfara states. The Labour Party (LP) and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) each won one governorship, with the LP winning in Abia State and the NNPP flipping Kano State. The governorship contests in Adamawa and Kebbi states were considered inconclusive due to narrow margins and result cancellations. Overall, there were minimal changes in the election outcomes compared to the ruling parties in each state, as the majority of governorships were retained by their respective parties. Similar to the federal elections, the performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) garnered significant attention and sparked post-election debates as some candidates alleged irregularities that negatively impacted their campaigns. Additionally, reports of violence and vote-buying were more prevalent during the gubernatorial elections in March, particularly in the states of Lagos and Kano. Social media discovery of election rigging methods in Nigeria Kwasau (2013) proposed that, during the 2023 governorship election in Nigeria, social media uncovered various instances of election rigging. These include:

1. Identification of non-existent polling units by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the allocation of voting materials to these fictitious units
2. Offering irresistible amounts of money to bribe INEC officials, police, and security agents in order to facilitate election rigging.
3. Appointment of partisan party supporters as electoral officers to oversee polling stations by INEC.
4. Diversion of electoral materials to private offices, residences, and traditional rulers' palaces for manipulation and falsification

5. Concealment or non-disclosure of the voters' register, which was loaded with false names and later used to create fictitious voters.
6. Use of voters' registers at polling units that were not numbered, allowing for the arbitrary addition of names to the register.
7. Unexpected and sudden relocation of polling stations and collation centers without prior announcement.
8. Pre-stuffing of ballot boxes with counterfeit ballot papers before Election Day
9. Placing illegal ballot papers in unauthorized ballot boxes
10. Sale of pre-stuffed ballot boxes to candidates.
11. Replacement or exchange of official ballot boxes with unofficial ones containing pre-marked ballot papers (e.g., throwing ballot boxes into water in riverine areas and replacing them with freshly stuffed ballot boxes from illegal sources).
12. Addition of unofficial ballot boxes to the official ones, which already contained thumb-printed ballot papers.
13. Manipulation and forgery of election results both at polling units and collation centres.
14. Instances of multiple voting, which were disregarded by INEC officials and the police.
15. Inclusion of underage children as voters, with indifference from INEC officials and the police.
16. Use of a special ethylated spirit to remove the so-called indelible ink from fingernails, facilitating multiple votes.
17. Application of Vaseline on fingernails before the application of the so-called indelible ink by polling officers to enable easy cleansing and facilitate multiple voting.
18. INEC officials engaged in the act of marking ballot papers with their thumbs.
 - Security agents participated in the act of marking ballot papers with their thumbs. Some domestic monitors are involved in marking ballot papers with their thumbs. Unauthorized accumulation and use of voting cards obtained illegally to cast votes on election days. Party agents serve as observers of voters' cards to facilitate impersonation and multiple voting. Dressing party agents in police uniforms to intimidate opponents at polling and collation centres. Deployment of armed thugs to harass and intimidate opponents and rival party agents.
 - Utilization of police and security operatives to instill fear in opponents and rival party agents
 - Employment of armed thugs, police, and security operatives to intimidate party agents from rival parties, forcing them to leave polling centres.
 - Members of ruling parties wearing INEC tags on polling days move freely between polling stations and collation centres with the intention of rigging elections.
 - Production and use of counterfeit election result sheets with matching numbers to authentic result sheets
 - Coercing some party agents at gunpoint to sign forged election results.

TABLE 1: Social Media Coverage on 2023 Nigeria Governorship Election Results and Winners

STATES	APC	LP	NNPP	PDP	WINNER
Abia	24,091	175,467		88,529	Alex Otti (LP)
Adamawa					
A'lbom	129,602	4,746	12,509	354,348	Umo Eno (PDP)
Bauchi	432,275		60,496	525,280	Bala Mohammed (PDP)
Benue	473,933			223,913	Fr. Hycinth Alia (APC)
Borno	545, 542			82,147	Babagana Zulum (APC)
C'River	258,619	5,957		179,636	Bassey Edet Otu (APC)
Delta	240,229	48,027		350,234	Sheriff Oborevwoori (PDP)
Ebonyi	199,131			80,191	Francis Nwifuru (APC)
Enugu	14,575	157,552		160,895	Peter Mbah (PDP)
Gombe	342,82			233,131	Inuwa Yahaya (APC)
Jigawa	618,449	965	37,156	368,726	Umar Namadi (APC)
Kaduna	730,002	58,283	21,405	719,196	Uba Sani (APC)
Kano	890,705		1,019,602	15,957	Abba Yusuf (NNPP)
Katsina	859,892	560	8,263	486,620	Dikko Radda (APC)
Kebbi	409,225			360,940	Nasiru Idris (APC)
Kwara	273,424	1,647	4,398	155,490	Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq (APC)
Lagos	762,134	312,329	1,583	62,449	Babajide Sanwo-Olu (APC)
Nasarawa	347,209			283,016	Abdullahi Sule (APC)
Niger	469,896	3,415	3,378	387,476	Umar Mohammed Bago (APC)
Ogun	276,298		1394	262,383	Dapo Abiodun (APC)
Oyo	256, 685	1,500		563, 756	Seyi Makinde (PDP)
Plateau	481,370	60,310		525,299	Caleb Mutfwang (PDP)
Rivers	95,274	22,224	335	302,614	Siminalayi Fubara (PDP)
Sokoto	453,661			404,632	Ahmed Aliyu (APC)
Taraba			202,278	257,926	Col. Kefas Agbu (PDP)
Yobe	317,113			124,259	Mai Mala Buni (APC)
Zamfara	311,976			377,726	Dauda Lawal-Dare (PDP)

Source: Social Media via Facebook, 2023

- Engaging in open solicitation of votes at polling centers without facing consequences

- Members of ruling parties falsely claim to be party agents for rival political parties in order to facilitate election result manipulation.
 - Intimidation and coercion of voters, sometimes at gunpoint, to vote for specific parties.
 - Ruling parties bribe agents of newly registered parties to gain their cooperation.
 - Exposing voters to the scrutiny of party agents during the voting process, thus depriving them of privacy and violating the requirement of secret balloting as per the law,
1. Posting of false results by INEC on its website for internet consumption that had borne with results emanating from polling centers. Change of candidates for election few days before election and in some cases after election.
 2. Sale of mandate to the highest bidder. Using different fingers to leave imprints on the ballots will make it harder to detect multiple votes. Agents of the ruling parties removing ballots from voters who are known to have voted against their preferred party using force and intentionally invalidating them by adding additional finger prints. voter bribery via stolen public funds. Foodstuffs and soup ingredients like rice, garri, beans, maize, groundnut oil, and Maggi are distributed, along with other commodities like sugar, slippers, roofing materials, clothing, etc., to encourage voting.

Refusing to count and discarding of ballot papers identified as thumb printed for political parties that are not favored

III. METHOD

Anyanwu (2004) defines research design as a framework or plan that guides the collection and analysis of data in a research project. In this study, the chosen research design is the survey method. This method allows the researcher to gain insights into the issues by accurately describing events as they occur. It also focuses on investigating the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions of a specific group of people through the administration of questionnaires and conducting face-to-face interviews.

Data Collection:

The primary data will be collected using structured questionnaires, which will be distributed to voters in Abia and Enugu states who possess Permanent Voters Cards (PVCs). Secondary data, on the other hand, will be gathered from previously published studies conducted by various authors, writers, and academics. Main sources of secondary data include journals, textbooks, websites, bulletins, magazines, and newspapers.

Population of the Study:

James (2016) explains that the sample frame specifies the number of elements from the total population that are selected to provide a representative sample, considering the impracticality of covering the entire population of voters in Abia State and Enugu State. The sample size was determined using the Cochran (1963) formula for an unknown population since the population of the study is unlimited. The Cochran (1963) Formula for an unknown population was used to determine the sample size. The formula is as follows:

$$No = (Z^2 * P * (1 - P)) / e^2$$

Where:

No = required sample size for unknown population

Z = value from the table at 95% confidence level (1.96)

P = estimated proportion of success (obtained from a pilot study) 1 - P = estimated proportion of failure (obtained from a pilot study)

e = error margin (0.05 or 5%)

To obtain the values of P and 1 - P, a pilot study was conducted with 20 randomly selected voters from Abia State and Enugu State. They were asked about their views on the utilization of social media in covering the 2023 governorship election in those states. 85% of the respondents gave a positive answer, while 15% gave a negative answer.

Applying the formula with these values, we get:

$$((1.96)^2 * (0.85 * 0.15)) / 0.0025 = 199.72 \approx 200$$

Sampling Techniques:

The study utilized a non-probability sampling technique, specifically a convenience sampling strategy. This choice was based on the researcher's accessibility and availability of participants at the time of the study.

Operational Measure of Variables:

The variables in the research hypotheses were identified and measured accordingly. The independent variable is "social media," which is measured by factors such as the number of followers/friends, engagement rate, hashtag usage, sentiment analysis, online petitions, and campaigns. The dependent variable is "political awareness and participation," which is measured by voter turnout, campaign contributions, and political party affiliation, knowledge of candidates and issues, and political activism. The operationalization is based on the research questions related to the role of social media in political awareness and participation in the 2023 governorship elections.

Data Analysis Technique:

The survey data was analyzed using regression analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). These methods were employed to derive meaningful insights from the data and evaluate the study's hypotheses. Descriptive statistics, such as mean percentages and frequencies, were used to measure the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Simple regression analysis in SPSS version 21 was employed to examine the four hypotheses.

Statistical Analysis of Data

Responses to the questions addressing social media as a marketing tool for election campaigns.

As shown in table 2, on the average, 268 (67%) voters, 257 (64%) voters, 11 (7%) voters, 4 (3%) voters and 6 (4%) voters ticked SA, A, UD, D and SD respectively the role social media played in Nigerian political awareness and participation in the just concluded 2023 governorship elections.

Table 3 shows that on the average, 72 (47%) voters, 70 (46%) voters, 3 (2%) voters, 4 (3%) voters and 3 (2%) voters ticked SA, A, UD, D and SD respectively on the depth and

frequency of social media coverage on the success of curtailing election rigging and fraud.

As shown in table 4, an average of 75(49%) voters, 71 (48%) voters, 2 (1%) voters, 2 (1%) voters and 2 (1%) voters

ticked SA, A, UD, D and SD respectively that social media determined a candidate’s chance of winning an election.

TABLE 2: Responses on the role social media played in Nigerian political awareness and participation in the just concluded 2023 governorship elections

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
(a)	Social media platforms contribute to increasing political awareness among Nigerian citizens during the 2023 governorship elections	65	51	19	6	11	152
(b)	What specific role did social media play in mobilizing and organizing Nigerian citizens to actively participate in the just concluded governorship elections?	89	55	2	3	3	152
(c)	Were there any challenges or negative consequences associated with the use of social media during the governorship elections in terms of political awareness and participation? If so, what were they?	35	91	16	3	7	152
(d)	Social media influence the political discourse and public opinion surrounding the 2023 governorship elections in Nigeria?	79	60	8	2	3	152
	Total	268	257	45	14	24	608
	Average Total	67	64	11	4	6	152
	Percentage	44	42	7	3	4	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

TABLE 3: Responses on the depth and frequency of social media coverage on the success of curtailing election rigging and fraud

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
(a)	Are there any notable differences in the depth and frequency of social media coverage on the success of curtailing election rigging and fraud across different regions or countries?	38	108	1	4	1	152
(b)	How frequently and prominently is the topic of curtailing election rigging and fraud covered on social media platforms?	69	71	5	2	5	152
(c)	To what extent does social media coverage on the success of curtailing election rigging and fraud influence public opinion and awareness?	92	44	7	6	3	152
(d)	Which social media platforms are most active in discussing the success or failure of efforts to curtail election rigging and fraud?	87	57	-	4	4	152
	Total	286	280	13	16	13	608
	Average Total	72	70	3	4	3	152
	Percentage	47	46	2	3	2	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

TABLE 4: Responses on whether social media determined a candidate’s chance of winning an election

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
(a)	Has the candidate been able to build a substantial and engaged following on social media, indicating a strong base of support?	97	51	2	-	2	152
(b)	How successful has the candidate been in leveraging social media to mobilize supporters and encourage voter turnout, as evidenced by active participation and sharing of campaign content?	86	60	1	3	2	152
(c)	How effectively has the candidate utilized social media platforms to engage with voters and convey their campaign message?	81	63	3	1	4	152
(d)	What is the sentiment and overall perception of the candidate on social media platforms, based on the analysis of comments, likes, shares, and mentions? Are they receiving predominantly positive or negative feedback?	39	108	-	4	1	152
	Total	303	282	6	8	9	608
	Average Total	75	71	2	2	2	152
	Percentage	49	48	1	1	1	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

TABLE 5: Responses on whether election campaign messages on social media influence obedient movement in Abia State and Enugu State

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
(a)	Election campaign messages on social media influence the level of obedience within the Obidient movement in Abia State and Enugu State?	37	101	4	8	12	152
(b)	Are there any identifiable patterns or trends in the types of election campaign messages on social media that have a stronger influence on the obedience of the Obidient movement in Abia State and Enugu State?	92	55	-	1	4	152
(c)	What specific strategies or techniques are used in election campaign messages on social media to influence the behavior and actions of the Obidient movement in Abia State and Enugu State?	64	82	2	3	1	152
(d)	How do factors such as the credibility of the information shared in election campaign messages on social media affect the perception and response of the Obedient movement in Abia State and Enugu State?	131	15	3	3	-	152
	Total	324	253	9	15	17	608
	Average Total	80	62	2	4	4	152
	Percentage	52	41	1	3	3	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5, on the average, 80 (52%) voters, 62 (41%) voters, 2 (1%) voters, 4 (3%) voters and 4 (3%) voters ticked SA, A, UD, D and SD respectively on election campaign messages on

social media influence Obidient movement in Abia State and Enugu State.

In table 6, an average of 102 (670%) voters, 34 (22%) voters, 4 (3%) voters, 7 (5%) voters and 5 (3%) voters ticked SA, A, UD, D and SD respectively on the questions on election via social media coverage.

In this section of the chapter, the Simple Regression analysis in SPSS version 21 was employed to test all four hypotheses outlined in chapter one.

Test of Hypothesis one:

H0: There is no significant role of social media in Nigerian political awareness and participation in the just concluded 2023 governorship elections.

H1: There is a significant role of social media in Nigerian political awareness and participation in the just concluded 2023 governorship elections.

The aforementioned hypothesis was examined by analyzing the data presented in tables, which illustrates the output obtained from SPSS.

TABLE 6: Responses to questions on election via social media coverage

S/N	STATEMENT	SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
(a)	Social media played a significant role in sensitizing the electorate and have easily access to INEC programme for 2023 election.	99	38	5	8	2	152
(b)	Obedient in Abia state and Enugu State were voters that use social media.	101	44	-	2	5	152
(c)	Nigeria politicians use social media to position their election campaign message in the mind of the voters.	113	30	1	6	2	152
(d)	Social media gives politicians an avenue for interacting with a more demanding voters.	96	25	9	13	9	152
	Total	409	137	15	29	18	608
	Average Total	102	34	4	7	5	152
	Percentage	67	22	3	5	3	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.936 ^a	.876	.875	.22574		
a. Dependent Variable: Political Awareness and Participation						
b. Predictors: (Constant): Social media						
ANOVA ^a						
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	53.830	1	53.830	1056.296	.000 ^b
	Residual	7.644	150	.051		
	Total	61.474	151			
a. Dependent Variable: Political Awareness and Participation						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social media						
Coefficients ^a						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.623	.129		4.840	.000
	Social media	.866	.027		.936	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Political Awareness and Participation						
Residuals Statistics ^a						
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	
Predicted Value	1.4885	4.9511	4.7632	.59707	152	
Residual	-.95109	.78020	.00000	.22500	152	
Std. Predicted Value	-5.485	.315	.000	1.000	152	
Std. Residual	-4.213	3.456	.000	.997	152	
a. Dependent Variable: Political Awareness and Participation						

Interpretation:

The model summary table indicates a strong positive correlation, with an R value of 0.936, suggesting a high degree of association between the variables. The R² value indicates that approximately 87.5% of the variation in political awareness and participation can be explained by social media, which is quite substantial. Additionally, the significance level (p-value) of 0.000, lower than the predetermined alpha level of 0.05, and a t value of 32.501 indicate that the regression model is a good fit and effectively predicts the outcome of the variables.

Decision:

Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha level (0.05) and the calculated t-value (32.501) is greater than the tabulated

t-value (1.960), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This suggests that social media played a significant role in Nigerian political awareness and participation during the recently concluded 2023 governorship elections.

Test of Hypothesis two:

H0: The coverage of Nigeria's elections through social media does not reduce election rigging and fraud.

H1: The coverage of Nigeria's elections through social media reduces election rigging and fraud.

Hypothesis two was examined using the information presented in tables. The SPSS output for this test is as follows:

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.826 ^a	.682	.680	.36080		
a. Predictors: (Constant), Social media						
Dependent Variable: Curtail election rigging and Fraud						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	41.948	1	41.948	322.242	.000 ^b
	Residual	19.526	150	.130		
	Total	61.474	151			
a. Dependent Variable: Curtail election rigging and Fraud						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social media						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-4.300	.506		-8.502	.000
	Social media	1.834	.102	.826	17.951	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Curtail election rigging and Fraud						
Residuals Statistics ^a						
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	
Predicted Value	1.2032	4.8718	4.7632	.52707	152	
Residual	-1.87177	.79683	.00000	.35960	152	
Std. Predicted Value	-6.754	.206	.000	1.000	152	
Std. Residual	-5.188	2.209	.000	.997	152	
a. Dependent Variable: Curtail election rigging and Fraud						

Interpretation:

i. The model summary table indicates a strong positive correlation, with an R value of 0.826, suggesting a significant relationship between the variables. The R2 value indicates that approximately 68% of the variation in curtailing election rigging and fraud can be explained by social media, which is a substantial proportion. Additionally, the significance level (p-value) of 0.000, lower than the predetermined alpha level of 0.05, and a t value of 17.951 indicate that the regression model is a good fit and effectively predicts the outcome of the variables.

Decision:

i. Since the p-value (0.000) is less than the alpha level (0.05) and the calculated t-value (17.951) is greater than the tabulated t-value (1.960), we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This suggests that the coverage of Nigeria's elections through social media contributes to curtailing election rigging and fraud.

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The research work yielded the following major findings:

1. Social media played a significant role in promoting Nigerian political awareness and participation during the recently concluded 2023 governorship elections.
2. The utilization of social media in covering Nigeria's elections contributes to the prevention of election rigging and fraud.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- I. the Electoral Act should be reviewed to include specific guidelines on the use of social media in Nigeria's future elections.

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